

Fast Facts for Teachers

Some of these facts will appear in the quizzes. We hope this sheet will allow you to resolve the conflicts that sometimes arise in the different source material used by different groups in the research process.

- Australia is the world's driest inhabited continent. Around 70% of our land is arid.
- More than two-thirds of the earth's surface is covered by water but less than 1% is freshwater. For the rest, 97% is too salty and 2% is ice.
- The extinction of the giant water-guzzling Diprotodon (the largest marsupial that ever lived) was hastened by the drying out of the Australian continent after the last ice age.
- In the Aboriginal Dreaming, the giant rainbow serpent emerged from beneath the earth. As she moved, she forced her way through the soil and rocks winding from side to side, making the great rivers flow in her path.
- The first water supply for European settlement in Australia was the Tank Stream which flowed into Sydney Cove. It was abandoned as a water source in 1826 because of problems with supply and pollution.
- Our toilets use 23% of the total amount of water used in the average home. Around 20% is used in the kitchen and 16% is used in the laundry.
- Filling an average in-ground swimming pool uses 50,000 litres of water
- Industry uses less water than homes but large amounts of water are used for producing everyday items. For example, 200 litres of water are needed to make one pair of pantyhose; 600 litres are needed to produce a chicken egg; 1,600 litres to produce an average steak; and 250,000 litres to produce the steel used to manufacture an average family car.
- The largest catchment in Australia is the Murray-Darling Basin, which extends through four states: Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, as well as the Australian Capital Territory. The basin supports about 11% of Australia's population and 41% of Australia's total gross value of agricultural production.
- The longest water supply pipeline in Australia runs between Perth and Kalgoorlie in Western Australia.

Fast Facts for Teachers

- The oldest dam in Australia is Parramatta Lake dam built in Sydney in 1856. Today, Parramatta Lake is a popular picnic and recreation site.
- Water stored and released from reservoirs is measured in megalitres (ML). A megalitre equals a million litres of water, which will fill a room 100 metres cubed.
- The largest dam in New South Wales is the Hume Dam on the Murray River. When full it holds 3.038 million megalitres of water. This is about six times the size of Sydney Harbour.
- The largest dam in Australia is the Gordon Dam in Tasmania which holds 12.45 million megalitres of water.
- Throughout Australia, approximately 15 million megalitres of water are used annually for irrigation purposes.
- Three major water attractions in Australia are World Heritage listed. These are Kakadu, the Great Barrier Reef and the Franklin River.
- The Darling River is 2,740 kilometres long and is the longest river in NSW.
- The volume of Sydney Harbour, which includes the Parramatta and Lane Cove Rivers is about 500,000 Megalitres covering an area of 5,500 hectares at high tide.
- Production from irrigation in NSW is valued at around \$1.4 billion each year. It accounts for around 20-30% of the total value of agricultural production in NSW.
- There are only 55 native species of freshwater fish in NSW and fewer than 200 in Australia as a whole. Africa, on the other hand, has around 2,000 species. At least six of the species found in NSW are considered threatened or endangered.